

**DENTAL PROGRAM FOR VETERANS
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA) MEDICAL FACILITIES**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes authority and policy for the implementation of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Dental Program.
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This Directive defines the policy for care of the dental and oral complex of patients within the purview of VHA.
- 3. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VHA Handbook 1130.1.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Dentistry (112D) is responsible for the contents in this VHA Directive.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** M-4 for Dentistry manual dated December 23, 1987; Directives 10-88-76, 10-90-039, 10-90-055, 10-91-048, 10-91-053, 10-91-128, 10-92-088, and 10-95-087 are rescinded.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of December 2003.

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Under Secretary for Health

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DENTAL PROGRAM FOR VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA) MEDICAL FACILITIES

1. PURPOSE: Under current statutes codified in Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.), as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides oral health services to eligible veterans therein specified. All VA medical centers and selected outpatient clinics provide oral and dental care. The Dental Program operates in conjunction with other elements of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Under Secretary for Health.

2. POLICY: The dental services provided to patients will be in accordance with the provisions of existing law and regulations. See 38 U.S.C., sections 1710(c) and 1712, and 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) sections 17.160 through 17.166. The type and extent of treatment recommended and authorized must be of sufficient quantity and quality to meet VA's responsibility of providing the beneficiary a satisfactory and professionally acceptable episode of treatment.

3. AUTHORITY: Title 38, U.S.C., as amended.

4. ACTION: The extent of dental services will be in accordance with the veteran's eligibility and entitlement as specified in 38 CFR. Dental care will include treatment of trauma, control of pain, and elimination of acute infection. It may be extended to provide definitive care to maintain or augment adequate masticatory function, improve appearance, and correct speech deficiencies, as consistent with the priorities for dental care as outlined in VHA Handbook 1130.1.

5. DEFINITIONS

a. **Inpatient Dental Program.** Dental treatment for inpatients is limited to providing dental care that is necessary to the veteran's medical needs as professionally determined.

b. **Outpatient Dental Program.** Dental treatment for outpatients relates to statutory eligibility granted to veteran beneficiaries, such as former Prisoners of War (POWs), those with service connected dental conditions related to trauma, etc.

c. **Extended Care.** Patients in domiciliaries, long term care units, and VA nursing home care units may be provided such dental treatment as is considered reasonably necessary to protect and maintain health.

d. **Dental Laboratories.** Dental Service Laboratories will be established and maintained at all VA healthcare facilities where inpatient and outpatient dental services are provided.

e. **Central Dental Laboratories.** Central Dental Laboratories will be established as authorized by the Under Secretary for Health and maintained to the extent necessary for support of VA dental services not provided by Dental Service Laboratories.

f. **Dental Service.** As VA facilities reorganize, many Dental Clinics may be operating under various other titles. The term dental services will refer to the dental and oral healthcare provided by VA. Dental Program or Dental Service refers to the on-site operation.

g. **Chief, Dental Service.** With reorganizations at many VA facilities, titles may change and vary nationally. The term, Chief Dental Service, refers to the dentist placed in charge of the clinic by management.